

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING APRIL 16, 2003

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:39 PM.

Members absent: W. Flewelling, P. Morley, and L. Oates

Also present: Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Assistant Town Administrator Joyce Munro, Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Town Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner

Handout(s) given out tonight:

1. *MWRA no-interest loan program April 16, 2003 memo distributed by Treasurer Freiner*
2. *Medical Insurance in FY04 Budget April 16, 2003 memo distributed by Member Stratford*
3. *2003 Warrant distributed by Town Administrator Kleckner*
4. *Annual and Special Town Meeting Article Summary distributed by Town Administrator Kleckner*
5. *DPW Organization Chart examples distributed by Town Administrator Kleckner*
6. *MMA Action Alert #5: April 11, 2003 distributed by Town Administrator Kleckner*

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the April 9, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member McCormick seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of April 9, 2003.*

Member Stratford (as the newly elected School Committee Chairperson replaces Warrant Committee member Kathy Miller) updated the Warrant Committee on the School Committee progress regarding the FY04 School Department budget (*Handout 2*).

Member Schafer reminded the Committee there might be a significant increase in the Minuteman budget. Member Callanan attended the Minuteman School Committee meeting last night. The State Legislature's budget for Belmont is \$483K, while the Governor's budget has Belmont's share as \$571K. The FY04 Recommended Budget amount is \$432,534. Member Schafer said this year the question will be if Belmont will go along with the Minuteman School Committee's vote to change the allocation formula to the State's allocation formula. Chairman Widmer admitted the State Budget is still

uncertain. The House Budget is due out next week, and the Committee will discuss this further when more financial information is known.

Discussion of Warrants for the Annual Town Meeting & Special Town Meeting (Handouts 3 and 4)

Town Meeting

Article 2: Authorization to Represent Town's Legal Interests

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Article 2** to Town Meeting.*

Article 10: Position Classification and Compensation Plan

Town Administrator Kleckner clarified that the unions, by contract negotiations, have already accepted the classification plan. Town Meeting is voting on acceptance of this plan. This issue will be discussed further on April 23rd's meeting.

Article 19: Authorization to Participate in MWRA Local Pipeline Assistance Program

Treasurer Freiner updated the Committee regarding the MWRA's loan program (*Handout 1*) request from the Water Department. The Program cannot actually be adopted the way the Water Department initially proposed the program. There are seven years remaining on this program, and the Town can go back the three years.

Treasurer Freiner spoke with a financial advisor from Southwest. The amount of borrowing in question is not big enough to affect the Town's debt capacity or bond rating. She loves the concept of zero interest money. This Program should not be turned down without good reason. She does not have a recommendation to the Warrant Committee one way or another. She also mentioned the Water Department really wants to replace non-electric meters with electric ones. Treasurer Freiner supports that project. We can spend the capital that we were going to appropriate to construction, if the Town takes the MWRA loan, and use it for the meter replacement project.

Vice Chairman White spoke with Water Superintendent Schultz. He mentioned Mr. Schultz has not met with Water Commissioner Kobayashi yet. Vice Chairman White said Mr. Schultz mentioned this might want to be withdrawn at this time. Chairman Widmer said this topic would be continued next week when more information is attained.

Article 20: Amendment to Public Safety and Property By-Law – Enact Increasing Fines

Member Kobus mentioned Health Director Moultrup said there is a cost to put these dogs in kennels, and it is ending up costing much more than it should. This should be supported if it's the cost of keeping the dogs until someone picks them up. Member Brusch remarked this Article is not doing that. The Committee needs clarification on what this Article is all about. Town Administrator Kleckner said this is for all violations of the dog law. Member Schafer thinks it would be good to know just how many cases

there are for this circumstance. She would like to know the offenses and why this kind of structure exists. Chairman Widmer asked Town Administrator Kleckner if someone could speak to the Warrant Committee at next week's meeting regarding this Article.

Article 27: Adopt Age Requirement for Original Appointment to Public Safety Position

Town Administrator Kleckner reminded the Committee that this Article was on the Warrant a few years ago. This would amend the State law that would set an age limit on the Police/Fire recruits. He believes the Town adopted a by-law that upped the age a few years ago. Member Heigham remembered the argument about 15 years ago was that there were some pension risks in regards to this topic. Town Accountant Hagg said there is a firefighter hired in his 40s who is eligible for pension in 10 years. Member Hofmann mentioned that the Workers Compensation statute does not cover Fire and Police. Chairman Widmer asked Town Administrator Kleckner to have Fire Chief Osterhaus here next week to speak of the risks of adopting or not adopting it. Member Hobbs is worried about the language in the Article because it is not clear about laterals (coming from another Town) in employment as a firefighter/police officer. Chairman Widmer agreed it would be good to clarify this Article, and it will be discussed further at next week's meeting.

Article 28: Establish Water Enterprise Fund / Article 29: Establish Sewer and Stormwater Enterprise Fund

Town Accountant Hagg is putting these on together as a grouping. If the Water and Sewer departments are going to be considered enterprise funds for the purpose of GASB 34, then she would like to do this through the computer system as well. The Sewer/Stormwater accounts would be put into a separate fund where the Board of Selectmen will still be the governing body. This would not affect the budgeting for the Sewer/Water funds. Member Schafer asked if we would be limited in the ability to see actual costs. Town Accountant Hagg said this would improve the actual costs because an allocation formula would be used to include the cost of things such as postage of the bills and the Treasurer's Office time in collecting bills. Member Stratford asked if the Capital Budget Committee should have a position on this issue due to the large amount of depreciation in these funds. Town Accountant Hagg replied the depreciation would occur either way, so the Capital Budget Committee would not need to weigh in on this issue. Member Hobbs thinks it would be easier to have these enterprise funds if we did want to do revenue bonds in the future because you would have the whole discrete enterprise in existence.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Article 28** to Town Meeting.*
- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member White seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Article 29** to Town Meeting.*

Article 30: Broaden Eligibility for Senior Tax Exemption and Increase Exemption Amount

Town Administrator Kleckner said this is a follow up to the circuit breaker article from last year. Selectman Brownsberger added this Article is within the statutory framework. It increases some exemptions and available amounts. He thinks this Committee should hear from Assessing Administrator Reardon as to the cost of all this to the Town. This will be discussed further at next week's meeting.

Article 31: Authorization to Establish Committee to Study Competitive Supply of Electric Light Services

Town Administrator Kleckner said the State had an electricity deregulation bill a few years ago that exempted municipal light departments. It stated if municipalities had not opened their system at the retail level by March 2003, a committee must be formed to review this issue.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Tillotson seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Article 31** to Town Meeting.*

Article 34: Home Rule Petition – Authorization to Institute Quarterly Tax Billing
Treasurer Freiner mentioned this would begin in FY05.

- *Member White made a motion, Member Tillotson seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Article 34** to Town Meeting.*

*Article 35: Home Rule Petition – Reorganization of Town's Public Works Functions /
Article 36: Amendment to General By-Laws – Appointment of Director of Public Works /
Article 37: Amendment to General By-Laws – Creation of Advisory Water Board /
Article 38: Amendment to General By-Laws – Changes to Role of Board of Cemetery Commissioners*

Town Administrator Kleckner updated the Committee on the unanimous consent of the compromises of the Boards/Commissions involved. The Board of Water Commissioners would be eliminated, but the Board of Selectmen would create a special advisory board. The Board of Cemetery Commissioners will remain elected. Article 38 allows the Board of Cemetery Commissioners to set plots fees. Member Hofmann asked if this would take the Perpetual Care fund out of the Cemetery Commissioners hands. Town Administrator Kleckner said all appropriations regarding the Perpetual Care Fund are done through a Town Meeting act.

Town Administrator Kleckner reviewed the basis of the Public Works consolidation: efficiency, effectiveness of service delivery, cost savings and cost avoidance. He acknowledged the Warrant Committee's concerns about cost savings. Town Administrator Kleckner reiterated no one is getting laid off and no one is losing compensation during this consolidation.

Town Administrator Kleckner proposed the elimination of four (currently vacant) positions, saving the Town over \$100K plus benefits. There is one additional position (currently vacant) in the meter reading area saves the Town over \$30K plus benefits. Also, by changing the Water Commissioners to being appointed and not elected, their option to have health insurance would be eliminated and the Town would save another \$32K. There are things to offset some of those savings, such as the classification Public Works Director position. If this vote were approved by Town Meeting, the Budget would be changed for FY04.

Member Hofmann asked for clarification on which level the staffing is starting with. Town Administrator Kleckner is taking the reductions from the Board of Selectmen's Recommended Budget for FY04 which includes: the one position down in highway, the one position down in a part-time Cemetery position, and two positions in Water (not including the Meter Reader position).

Selectman Brownsberger emphasized there are no filled positions being eliminated. Member Hobbs said it would be helpful for Town Administrator Kleckner to mention that, although four positions are being eliminated, they are all currently vacant positions that will not be filled.

Town Administrator Kleckner mentioned this consolidation would allow the Public Works department to absorb any absences or allocate more staff to a particular issue with this centralized department. He then summarized some cost-saving opportunities:

- Allocation of resources
 - Example: seasonal workloads could be reduced with more staff being available for these duties
- Coordination of common functions
 - Example: the mowing, one department currently mows and stops at an "imaginary line"
- Water/Sewer – both departments deal with utilities underground using much of the same equipment
- Centralizing administration – procurement of goods, services, supplies, and equipment could be reduced with economies of scale
- Emergency response pool – potential for a more immediate savings
 - Example: snowplowing and currently having to pay outside contractors at the cost of \$17K/hour of a storm
- Enhanced management – Town Administrator Kleckner's strong feeling is that this may be the most important element in all of this – a manager who is well qualified, good in strategic planning, and deals with employees better.
- Employee development – create more growth, opportunities for promotion and provide more variety and satisfaction in the job
- Outsourcing –the sewer meter reading and billing being outsourced to the Light Department
- Technology

Town Administrator Kleckner passed out (*Handout 5*) reviewing each organizational chart's positions with different scenarios.

Vice Chairman White told Town Administrator Kleckner he thinks this a very strong presentation that shows a clear line of thinking. He is supportive of this proposal.

Member Hofmann is concerned about the administrative staff for the Cemetery once the new Cemetery starts selling plots. That will significantly affect their work. Town Administrator Kleckner mentioned that, although it has not been formally decided, the sale of plots might be offset with additional administrative personnel.

Member Callanan asked how the municipal employees would be informed on this topic. Town Administrator Kleckner answered he would like to meet with those employees before Town Meeting.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member White seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Articles 35 - 38** to Town Meeting.*

Article 39: Home Rule Petition – Tax Check-Off Box for Contributions to the Town's General Fund / Article 40: Tax Check-Off Box for Contributions to the Town's General Fund

Town Administrator Kleckner mentioned Article 39 is the correction for Article 40 (which will be withdrawn). Selectman Brownsberger is very concerned for the Town raising funds for private services, although he is ambivalent to this Article.

The check-off boxes are for capital projects, educational scholarships, general scholarships, and Senior Center equipment and furnishings. Treasurer Freiner said these check-off boxes would be on the real estate and excise tax bills.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Heigham seconded said motion, and Members Callanan, Tillotson, Heigham, and Hofmann voted to **not recommend Article 39** to Town Meeting.*
- *Chairman Widmer and Members Curtis, Hobbs, White, Kobus, Brownsberger, Schafer, Bruschi, and Stratford voted to **recommend Article 39** to Town Meeting.*
- *Member McCormick **abstained** from said action.*

Article 41: Vote to Delay Reconstruction of the Town Hall Annex

Selectman Brownsberger noted Town Meeting's vote for this Article should occur in April's segment of Town Meeting.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Heigham seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **not recommend Article 41** to Town Meeting.*

Special Town Meeting

Article 2: Acquisition of Easements for Pleasant Street Reconstruction Project

Selectman Brownsberger mentioned there is no road width expansion regarding this Article; this is all for temporary constructions. Member Callanan asked if eminent domain is a last resort for this Town. Town Administrator Kleckner answered it is a last resort for Belmont.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Special Town Meeting Article 2** to Town Meeting.*

Article 3: Appropriation of Funds to Temporarily Relocate Waverley Fire Station

This Article will be discussed next week when a precise amount is available.

Article 4: Appropriation of Funds to Replace Fire Emergency Equipment

- *Member Brusch made a motion, Member Heigham seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Special Town Meeting Article 4** to Town Meeting.*

Article 5: Transfer Funds from Prior Year Capital Budget Projects to FY 2003 Reserve Fund

Town Administrator Kleckner informed the Committee this is a clean up of prior fiscal years capital budget appropriations. Town Accountant Hagg also mentioned that she and the Department Heads worked together for this list.

The Committee will discuss this further next week when a listing of the accounts and amounts is available.

Article 6: Transfer Funds from Water Fund to General Fund

Town Administrator Kleckner informed the Committee this is a housekeeping Article.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Special Town Meeting Article 6** to Town Meeting.*

Article 7: Alewife Tax Legislation

Town Administrator Kleckner said this is to protect the Town for loss of revenue in case the said property was sold to a non-profit entity.

- *Member White made a motion, Member Hobbs seconded said motion, and the Warrant Committee unanimously voted to **recommend Special Town Meeting Article 7** to Town Meeting.*

Other

Chairman Widmer reminded the Committee that the League of Women Voters Warrant discussion would be held April 24th at the Belmont Hill School. Chairman Widmer would like Warrant Committee members to attend.

Member Heigham made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk